UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES

5300 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 304, Los Angeles, California 90029 (213) 464-5100

July 26, 1982

To: All UFMCC Congregations and Clergy

Re: Membership in Church Councils and/or Ministerial Associations

From: Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson and
R. Adam DeBaugh, Co-Directors,
Department of Ecumenical Relations

PLEASE RETURN THIS A.S.A.P.

Does your congregation belong to a local, state or provincial Council of Churches? ___yes___no

If so, please list below the name of the council, name of the president or executive director.

How long have you been a member? _____

If you are clergy or a worship coordinator, are you a member of a Ministerial Accociation? ___yes___no. How long_____?
Please give us the name of the association and its president or executive director.

Thank you for your assistance. This information will be of great importance in our application to the National Council of Church in Christ in the U.S.A.

Grace & Peace,

Rev. Elder Nancy L. Wilson

SURVEY OF ECUMENICAL RELATIONS
in the
UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP
of
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES:
AN ANALYSIS

The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026 with funding from
CLIR DHC Grant 2026-2028

https://archive.org/details/2174.09.35

SURVEY RETURNS

78 total responses out of a possible 101
71 responses out of a possible 87 U.S. church groups
7 out of a total of 17 non- U.S. churches

U.S. CHURCHES:

Chartered Churches: 44 responses out of 52 possible
Missions: 10 responses out of a possible 17
Study Groups: 17 out of a total of 23 respnses

SURVEY OF ECUMENICAL RELATIONS IN THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES: AN ANALYSIS

Rev Elder Nancy Wilson

This survey was undertaken as a research project to try to asses the degree of ecumenical involvement of local churches, and how local churches preceive ecumenical involvement. Since I only received 7 responces from non-US MCC Churches, I have recorded their responses separately. The following analysis is of MCC's in the U.S. Ecumenical Involvement in this survey is measured in terms of membership in ecumenical organizations (councils of churches, etc.); involvement or participation in such organizations; relationships with other Christian churches in the area (formal or informal); relationships with the host church (if that is the case); and the general attitude of the congregation and Pastor or Worship Coordinator about ecumenical involvement.

The answers to questions 1, 4, 5 and 6 of the Survey can be objectified for the most part, and the results follow this analysis. One conclusion that can be drawn is, that, for the most part, those MCC churches which are housed in the facilities of another church have a higher degree of ecumenical involvement than those which do not. The most significant statistical correlation in this regard is with question #1, in which 7 out of the 9 MCC churches which are members of councils of churches meet in the facilities of another church.

The two churches which are members of councils of churches which do not meet in other churches (MCC-Dallas and MCC-Tampa) are both in the South. This brings us to another significant correlation. Many more MCC churches the Northeast, Great Lakes and the Northwest Districts (23) meet in other churches than in the Southwest, Southeast or South Central Districts (5); the Mid-Central and South Atalntic Districts have a total of 6 MCC groups meeting in the facilities of other churches. In the same way, the MCC churches in the Northern Districts have greater ecumenical involvement.

The high correlation between meeting in other churches and ecumenical involvement may be causative, i.e., in order to meet in another church's facilities, the MCC congregation must of necessity begin to communicate and work with that church, it's pastor, board, etc. Once an MCC church has established relationships with a host church, this may provide a supportive base from which to begin to operate in ecumenical circles (particularly if the host church is ecumenically involved). There are a few MCC churches that have conciously chosen to meet on another church's facilities (for a certain period of time, or indefinitely) in order to reach out ecumenically. A case in point was the MCC church in Washington D.C., which 2 years ago voted to stay

at the Congregational Church, even though there were some problems there, (and even though they had a better offer elsewhere), in order to witness to that church.

On the other hand, the correlation between meeting in the facilities of another church and ecumenical involvemnet may not be causative. It may be the case that churches in the Northern U.S. are generally more "liberal", and therefore more open both to hosting an MCC congregation and responding to overtures from MCC churches that want to participate in ecumenical organizations.

Conversely, MCC churches in the South may become more isolated and are less involved ecumenically not because they wish to be isolated, but because of resistance from non-MCC churches. Most of our churches which own their own churches seem to have done so in part because other churches were just not open to them. In addition, my own observation is that pastors and laypeople from a fundamentalist or conservative Christian background seem to be somewhat suspect of the "liberalism" of the ecumenical movement. Related to this is the whole question of MCC-dentity: 1). many people still have difficulty in making a transition from their church-of-orgin to MCC (and consequently still carry around old prejudices, etc) and 2) particularly for Study Groups and Missions it is important to establish an identity as an MCC church before attempting to relate to other Christian Churches - and it may take more time for one MCC congregation to do that than another.

In conclusion on this point, meeting in another church facility may enable some MCC's to become more ecumenically involved. But just because an MCC does not meet in the facilities of another church does not mean they have to be isolated (see in particular MCC-Dallas, MCC-Tampa, MCC-San Diego, MCC-Fort Worth). In addition, there are several MCC's which meet in other churches but are never the less very isolated.

Well over one-half of the pastors or worship coordinators are involved in a local ministerial alliance or organization. All but one pastor favored relating ecumenically, although 3 or 4 also said it was not a high priority. On the whole, most pastors or worship coordinators reported a postive attitude among their congregation, although they said some people expressed fear and reservations about ecumenical involvement. In general, the surveys reflected the view that we do not want to become involved ecumenically in order to gain acceptance or approval from other churches; rather, we become involved in order to witness to what God is doing in MCC and in the lives of Gay Christian people. We have something to say and share with other Christian churches. In addition, we just might be able to learn something from them.

I found out some other things. There were several surveys which indicated to me that the persons who filled them out were not really aware of what the word ecumenical means. In almost one-third of the surveys, I found what one might call a "passive" approach, e.g., "We'd be glad to cooperate with other churches if they came to us," or, "We applied to the council of churches three years ago, but they never answered our letter;" or, "We'd be open to the idea if it happened," etc. I know of only one case (MCC-Toledo) where an MCC church was actually invited to join a local council of churches. Just as with other areas of community involvement, "they" are not going to come to us. If a local MCC does want to relate to other Christian churches they are going to have to take initiative. My feeling is that some MCC churches feel more comfortable in relating to the secular gay community or non-gay political organizations or situations, than to other churches. There may be several reasons for this: 1) some deep-seated resentments towards the established churches 2) feelings of fear or intimidation in relation to the established churches (not wanting to deal with their questions about our legitimacy, our credentials, etc.); 3) not knowing the "ins and outs" of inter-church politics; 4) general ignorance about what other Christian churches, denominations and ecumenical organizations are about and are doing. It seems to me that we do very little to prepare or encourage pastors or worship coordinators to help congregations in MCC see themselves as part of the Universal Church.

The following are samples of comments from the surveys in terms of attitudes towards ecumenism:

"We need to establish our own identity before we relate to other churches"

"We get along OK with other churches - we have no contact with them"

"I am very opposed to UFMCC joining the National Council or the World Council of Churches"

"We build bridges where we can"

"We welcome the opportunity to be involved with other churches"

"I favor informal, one-to-one involvement, rather than joing an organization"

"We have much experience in the ostrich game - I am tempted to kick the exposed posteriors (says a pastor of a congregation)"

"Many of our people attend other Christian churches"

"I am a little suspicious of membership in the National Council of Churches because of my church background"

"If we are true Christians, we will want to associate with other Christians"

"It is an outreach and educational opportunity"

"My congregation could care less, but I favor being involved"

" There are diverse feelings - I find people have a more positive attitude (towards relating ecumenically) the longer they've been in MCC and the more comfortable they are with themselves "

" I don't have time "

" The older members are self-satisfied and see no need - the newer members are more open and see the importance of involvement "

" We are open to the idea, but the wider Religuous community continues to 'blackball' us. "

" Involvement is important in overcoming ghettoization and isolation "

Several MCC churches are very creatively involved with other Christian Churches and organizations, particulary MCC-Boston, MCC-Seattle, MCC-San Diego, MCC-Chicago, MCC-San Jose, MCC-Hartford, MCC-Dallas, and others. They all combine formal means (membership in organizations) and informal means, (such as joint worship, sharing pulpits, visting other churches, cooperative ministries) of ecumenical involvement. We need to document and share their experiences so we can learn from them.

It is my personal opinion that there should be more leadership and clarification on a Fellowship level in regards to inter-church relations. While I sometimes feel that, for our size, we are beaurecraticized to death, I think we need a Department of Inter-Church Relations , involving clergy and laypeople.

QUESTION #1: Does your church belong to a council of churches?

CHARTERED CHURCHES: 7 out of 44 responded YES

	Address of Council
San Francisco, Ca.	Rev. Marvin Chandler San Francisco Council of Churches 944 Market St., 4th Floor San Francisco, Ca. 94102
San Jose	Santa Clara Council of Churches POB 26308 San Jose, Ca. 95159
Hartford, Conn.	Dr. David Mellon Capitol Region Conference of Churches 30 High St. Hartofrd, Conn. 06103
Tampa, Florida	Florida Fellowship of Community Churches Orlando, Fla. (affiliated with Florida Council of Churches and the N.C.C.)
Honolulu, Hawaii	Stanley E. Kain Hawaii Council of Churches Bldg. A Suite 403 200 N. Vineyard Honolulu, Hawaii, 96817
Dallas, Texas	Greater Dallas Council of Churches
Seattle, Washington	Dr. William B. Cate 4759 15th Ave. NE Seattle, Washington, 98105

Districts:

Northwest - 4

Northeast - 1

Southeast - 1

S. Central - 1

QUESTION # 1 (Continued)

MISSIONS: 1 out of 10 responded YES

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Address of Council

Rev. Charles Straut, Jr.
66 Count St., Suite 1107
Brooklyn, NY 11201

District: Northeast

(The one church which responded YES meets in another church)

STUDY GROUPS: 1 out of 17 responded YES

Toledo, Ohio

Address of Council
Rev. Leonard Klippen
Toledo Area Council of Churches
2130 Madison Ave.
Toledo, Ohio

District: Great Lakes

(The one church which responded YES meets in another church)

TOTALS:

A total of 9 church groups out of 71 responded YES

Of those, 7 meet in other churches

Districts:

Northwest - 4

Northeast - 2

Gr. Lakes - 1

Southeast - 1

S. Central- 1

Note: At least one Chartered church responded that there was no Council of Churches in their city (Chicago); several felt that the local Council was all but disfunctional, and not worth the bother.

QUESTION #4: Are you currently negotiating or discussing membership in a local, state or regional council ofchurches?

CHARTERED CHURCHES: 10 out of 44 responded YES

Palomar, Ca.
Sacramento
San Diego
Indiananpolis, In.
Baltimore, Md.
Boston, Mass.
Detroit, Mi.
St. Louis, Mo.
Pittsburgh, Pa.
Fort Worth, Texas

Districts:

Northeast - 3
Southwest - 2
Great Lakes - 2
Northwest - 1
Mid-Central - 1
South Central- 1

3 out of the 10 meet in other churches

MISSIONS: 1 out of 10 responded YES

San Luis Obispo — District: Southwest

the 1 Yes response does not meet in another church

STUDY GROUPS: 3 out of 17 responded YES

Talahassee, Fla.
Asbury Park, N.J.
Syracuse, N.Y.

Districts:

Northeast - 2
Southeast - 2

1 out of the 3 YES responses meets in another church

TOTALS:

14 out of 71 responded YES

Districts:
Northeast - 5
Southwest - 3
Great Lakes - 2
Northwest - 1
Mid-Central - 1
S. Central - 1
Southeast - 1

QUESTION #5: Are you in any way involved with or in contact with a local, state or regional council of churches?

CHARTERED CHURCHES:

Out of 44, 23 responded YES
(of the 23, 11 meet in other churches)

MISSIONS:

Out of 10, 3 responded YES
(of the 3, 2 meet in other churches)

STUDY GROUPS

Out of 17, 6 responded YES

(of the 6, 4 meet in other churches)

TOTAL:

Out of 71, 32 responded YES

Districts:

Northeast - 6
Northwest - 6
Southwest - 5
Great Lakes - 5
Soub Central - 4
Southeast - 3
Mid-Central - 3
South Atlantic - 0

QUESTION #6 - Is your local church a member of/or involved with any other ecumenical organizations?

CHARTER CHURCHES: 18 out of 44 responded YES
(out of 18, 12 meet in other churches)

Districts:
Northwest.....4
Great Lakes.....3
Northeast.....2
Southwest.....2
SouthCentral.....2
Southeast.....2
South Atlantic...0

MISSIONS: 1 out of 10 responded YES
(the one Yes response meets in another church)

District:
Northeast

STUDY GROUPS: 8 out of 17 responded YES
(6 out of the 8 meet in other churches)

Districts:
Northeast.....5
Southwest.....1
MidCentral.....1
South Atlantic...1

TOTAL:
27 out of the 71 responded YES
(21 meet in other churches)

Districts:
Northeast.....8
Great Lakes.....3
Northwest.....4
Southwest.....3
SouthCentral.....2
Southeast.....2
MidCentral.....1
South Atlantic...1

QUESTION #8: Does your church meet in the facilities of another church?

CHARTERED CHURCHES: 21 out of 44 responded YES:

Church	Denomination of host church	Relationship
Anchorage, Alaska	Unitarian	Excellent
Laguna Beach, Ca.	Unitarian	Excellent
East Bay	Episcopal	Excellent
San Francisco	Presbyterian	Excellent
San Jose	Campus Christian Center	Excellent
Denver, Colorado	Unitarian	Excellent
Hartford, Conn.	Methodist	Not Good
Jacksonville	Greek Orthodox Catholic	Good
Miami	Evangelical Lutheran	Good
Honolulu, Hawaii	Unitarian	Excellent
Chicago, Illinois	United Church of Christ	Excellent
De Moines, Iowa	Unitarian	Excellent
Boston, Mass.	Methodist	Good
Detroit, MI.	Methodist	Excellent
Twin Cities, Minn.	Society of Friends	Excellent
Akron, Ohio	Unitarian	Excellent
Coninccati	Episcopal	Excellent
Pittsburgh, Pa.	University-City Ministries	Good
Nashville, Tenn.	Methodist	Good
Portland, Oregon	Methodist	Excellent
Seattle, Wash.	Methodist	Excellent

Denominations:

Unitarians	- 6
Methodist	- 6
Episcopal	- 2
Campus Centers	- 2
Presbyterian	- 1
U.C.C.	- 1
Evan. Lutheran	- 1
Friends	- 1
Gr. Orth. Cath.	- 1

Districts:

Northwest	- 7
Great Lakes	- 4
Mid-Central	- 3
Northeast	- 3
Southeast	- 2
Southwest	- 2
South Atlantic	- 1
South Central	- 0

QUESTION #8 (Continued)

MISSIONS: 6 out of 10 responded YES:

Mission:	Denomination of host church	Relationship
Stockton, Ca.	Unitarian	Good
Augusta, Ga.	Unitarian	Good
Worcester, Mass.	United Church of Christ	Good
Brooklyn, NY	Unitarian	Good
Hispana, NY	Episcopal	Could be better
Willamette Valley, Ore.	Presbyterian	Excellent

Denomination		District	
Unitarian	- 3	Northeast	- 3
United Church	- 1	Northwest	- 2
Episcopal	- 1	South Atlantic	- 1
Presbyterian	- 1		

STUDY GROUPS: 9 out of 17 responded YES:

Study Group:	Denomination of host church	Relationship
Syracuse, NY	Episcopal	Good
Fresno, Ca.	Unitarian	Excellent
Champaign, Ill.	Presbyterian	Excellent
Flint, MI.	Unitarian	Good
Portsmouth, NH.	Unitarian	Excellent
Toledo, Ohio	Methodist	Good
Austin, Tx.	United Church of Christ	Good
Knoxville, Tenn.	Presbyterian	Good
State College, Pa.	Campus Chapel	Good

Denominations		Districts	
Unitarians	- 3	Northeast	- 3
Presbyterian	- 2	Great Lakes	- 3
Episcopal	- 1	South Atlantic	- 1
Methodist	- 1	Southwest	- 1
United C of C	- 1	South Central	- 1
Campus	- 1		

QUESTION #8 (Continued)

TOTALS

A total of 36 out of 71 church groups responded YES

Denominations		Districts	
Unitarian	- 12	Northeast	- 10
Methodist	- 7	Great Lakes	- 7
Presbyterian	- 4	Northwest	- 6
Episcopal	- 4	Mid-Central	- 3
United Church of Christ	- 3	South Atlantic	- 3
Campus Centers	- 3	Southwest	- 2
Evan. Lutheran	- 1	Southeast	- 2
Society of Friends	- 1	South Central	- 1
Greek Orth. Catholic	- 1		

QUESTIONS #1, (or 4), 5 and 6

RATING OF ECUMENICAL INVOLVEMENT

CHURCHES WHICH ANSWERED YES to 3 out of 4 questions (High involvement)

Chartered Churches:	10
Missions:	1
Study Groups:	1
	12

Districts:
Northeast: 4
Northwest: 2
South Central: 2
Great Lakes: 1
Southeast: 1
Southwest: 1

CHURCHES WHICH ANSWERED YES TO 2 out of 4 questions (Much involvement)

Chartered Churches:	6
Missions:	1
Study Groups:	4
	11

Districts:
Northeast: 2
Northwest: 2
Southwest: 2
Mid-Central: 2
Great Lakes: 2
Southeast: 1

CHURCHES WHICH ANSWERED YES to 1 out of 4 questions (Some involvement)

Chartered Churches:	17
Missions:	1
Study Groups:	7
	25

Districts:
Southwest - 5
Great Lakes - 5
Northeast - 4
Mid-Central - 3
South Central - 3
Southeast - 2
Northwest - 1
South Atlantic - 1

CHURCHES WHICH ANSWERED YES TO none of the 4 questions (little or no involvement)*

Chartered Churches:	11
Missions:	7
Study Groups:	5
	23

Districts:
Southwest: 6
South Atlantic: 5
Northwest: 4
Northeast: 2
S. Central: 2
Southeast: 2
Mid-Central: 2
Great Lakes: 0

* Some factors to consider are that this chart measures church involvement - in some of these churches, pastors are involved, but not the congregation as a whole; also, some cities have no council of churches or similar organizations;

SURVEY ON ECUMENICAL RELATIONS: CHURCHES OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES

AUSTRALIA

Chartered Churches:

MCC-Sydney: Meets in a Uniting Church, shared a joint Easter service, and a Rap Group. Otherwise, little ecumenical involvement.

MCC-Adelaide: No real dialogue with other churches -"We go it alone"

Missions:

MCC-Brisbane: Meet in Society of Friends facility; the political climate in Queensland is very uptight about the whole issue of civil liberties, including gay rights." MCC is not welcome in official circles, religious or political.

Study Groups:

MCC-Gold Coast: "No contact whatsoever with other churches"

MCC-Perth: Liberal Catholics give some support, otherwise, "we are very isolated, even by Australian standards."

NEW ZEALAND

Study Group:

MCC-Auckland: Meets in an Anglican church, and has a "so-so" relationship with them; their first priorty is to build a strong MCC church

NIGERIA

Chartered Churches:

MCC-Zaria: Rev. Maduka attends the local Council of Churches and is presently negotiating membership in the Nigerian National Council of Churches. He says he has a good rapport with other pastors and Christian churches.